

VZCZCXR05244
RR RUEHDE
DE RUEHAD #0158/01 0321342
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 011342Z FEB 07
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8159
INFO RUEHDE/AMCONSUL DUBAI 6798

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 ABU DHABI 000158

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR U/S FORE FROM THE AMBASSADOR AND CONSUL GENERAL
DEPT FOR NEA/SCA/EX (ALFORD, KACZMAREK), M/SA (OFFUT)
DEPT FOR DS/IP/NEA (LAAS), NEA/ARP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL PGOV ETTC IR MASS AE

SUBJECT: SCENE-SETTER FOR THE VISIT OF U/S FORE TO THE UAE

¶11. (SBU) U/S Fore, Mission UAE warmly welcomes you and looks forward to your February 13-14 visit to Dubai. Your meeting with Vice President, Prime Minister and Dubai Ruler Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum (MbR) will allow us to make progress on our new consulate compound (NCC) project and request more robust security assistance for our current ConGen, as well as to discuss other bilateral issues. With increasing staff and security vulnerability, moving up the start date on construction of the NCC is post's top security and management priority. Your meeting with the Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and subsequent press interviews, are excellent outreach opportunities to review, among other issues, the US Open Door/Secure Borders policy and our desire to increase business and people-to-people linkages between the US and the region. At the Dubai School of Government(DSG-) a relatively new institution unique in the region -) you will have an opportunity for professional outreach to peers eager for creative public policy thinking, and to provide DSG administrators and program managers insight into US public policy innovations like the Diplomatic Readiness Initiative. We know the government, and MbR, are keen to enhance the professionalism and efficiency of the UAE's public sector. The Mission's ELO and LES staff, who you will be meeting live and by DVC, are also excited by the opportunity to exchange thoughts and concerns.

Background of Bilateral Ties

¶12. (SBU) The UAE is a close ally and an important partner intent on cooperating with us to create a stable economic, political, and security environment in the Middle East, in particular throughout the Gulf region. One of the world's wealthiest countries on a per capita basis, the UAE has adopted progressive economic policies that have strengthened its position as a regional hub for trade, transportation, investment and tourism, thus contributing to regional economic stability. Dubai, with far less oil wealth than its sister and to some extent rival emirate Abu Dhabi, has led this innovative approach and has become a model for private sector-led development that is being copied in other Gulf states. However, a highly traditional governmental structure underlies the economic and development innovation throughout the country, with political and economic power concentrated in the hands of royal families in each of the seven emirates.

We are engaging the UAE on ways to create a more effective civil society network that could lead to a more open political system.

Centralized Power Structure

¶13. (SBU) The composition of federal and emirate-level governing bodies is generally derived from only a few Emirati

families; the two most important are the ruling families of Abu Dhabi (Al-Nahyan) and Dubai (Al-Maktoum). Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum (MbR) is the Vice President, Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Ruler of Dubai. MbR, in his capacity as Ruler of Dubai, maintains personal control (working through a select group of trusted deputies) over the bulk of Dubai's booming economic sector. These deputies act much like CEOs for Dubai's large parastatal enterprises, competing with each other as much as with outside competition.

ConGen Security and New Building Status

14. (SBU) ConGen Dubai is the largest post in the NEA region located in commercial space; Dubai's staff will reach 129 this Summer. Despite wide-ranging, ongoing efforts by the Mission (including placement of jersey barriers and the provision of extra police coverage) and good cooperation from the Dubai government, ConGen physical and technical security remains wholly inadequate in almost all aspects. This vulnerability will continue to increase along with the post's size and growing public profile, the latter largely a result of the presence of the Iran Regional Presence Office. The Mission's absolute top management and security priority is moving the ConGen to a secure, stand-alone structure with proper setback as soon as possible. The government of Dubai granted a seven-acre-plus site in the diplomatic quarter for the express purpose of constructing a new US Consulate General. We are confident that the Government of Dubai, which badly wants a new US facility here, will facilitate its construction. According to the current OBO long-range building plan, the NCC construction is scheduled to start in FY-2010 with a completion date of 2013. This is simply too long to leave a staff of 129 or more in vulnerable

ABU DHABI 00000158 002 OF 003

facilities. We propose that the construction start date be moved forward to 2007, and the ConGen move as soon as possible to an interim facility with a secure perimeter and setback. Dubai will be sending a cable reviewing our security situation with more specific proposals.

Consular Affairs

15. (SBU) In FY 2006, Dubai processed approximately 36,000 NIV applications. It is the major adjudicating post for Iranian NIV applications (45 percent of its NIV workload involves Iranian applicants) and it provides services to an estimated 17,000 resident American citizens in Dubai and the Northern Emirates. According to the Dubai Board of Tourism, over 200,000 US citizens transit and/or visit Dubai annually. As a result of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, thousands of US military personnel and Department of Defense civilians and contractors either transit Dubai to other locations or visit for rest and recreation. Dubai remains the number-one overseas liberty port -- hosting 77,000 service-men and women annually.

Defense Cooperation

16. (SBU) The UAE's contribution to U.S. defense interests in the region has been extensive and enduring. The ports of Jebel Ali and Fujairah are vital to U.S. Navy interdiction operations, re-supply and sustainment, and combat support efforts across the region*Dubai's large and impressive Jebel Ali port is the number one port outside of the US for US warship visits (492 in 2006), and has been for the last three years; it hosts a sizable permanent USO operation.

Iraq

17. (SBU) The UAE offers political support for Iraq but is careful not to get out in front of the GCC and Arab League,

having hosted a July visit by Iraqi PM Maliki and the September 10 Iraq Compact Preparatory Group meeting. However the UAE has no diplomatic staff at its embassy in Baghdad and UAE officials avoid travel there (particularly since the April 2006 attacks on its mission and kidnapping of the Deputy Charge d'Affaires in May). The UAE is engaged in regional efforts to facilitate reconciliation between Sunni and Shi'a forces.

Iran

18. (SBU) The UAE's political relations with Iran are strained over Iran's 35-year occupation of three disputed islands in the Gulf, Iran's nuclear aspirations, and Iran's support for Shi'a factions in Iraq. The UAE has been careful to adopt a non-confrontational stance to avoid jeopardizing its substantial trade and business interests with Iran. The UAEG has no export control law, in spite of long-standing U.S. urging. Given the targeted nature of UNSCR 1737 on Iran, the direct impact on the UAE is likely to be minor. UAE officials have expressed concern on several occasions to US officials about the US decision to open an Iran-focused office in Dubai. Their comments, however, have expressed a desire for less publicity and have not included a request to close the office.

Lebanon

19. (SBU) The UAE was very active throughout 2006 in providing humanitarian and security assistance to Lebanon. Significant donations of supplies transited the UAE "air bridge" established for that purpose. In the post-conflict phase, the UAE has been at the forefront of reconstruction efforts, continuing a long-standing de-mining effort and contributing resources for school construction, hospitals, humanitarian meals, etc.

Reform Agenda

110. (SBU) The UAEG's continued commitment (and ability) to use its sizeable wealth to satisfy the needs of its small citizenry constitutes the "ruling bargain" and explains the absence to date of significant pressure from the indigenous -- albeit minority)- UAE national population for change. Our democratic reform strategy aims to encourage the ruling

ABU DHABI 00000158 003 OF 003

families to introduce fully-representative government/elections. In December 2006, for the first time in the country's history, a designated group of six thousand "electors" selected one-half of the 40-member Federal National Council (FNC), an advisory body with no real legislative power. The electors were directly appointed by the rulers of each emirate, and could only vote for one of the other electors. To the surprise of many, only one woman was elected to the FNC; several emirate rulers have subsequently named other women among their appointees to the remaining half of the FNC. We are advocating progress toward an open and independent operating environment for civil society, a free and independent media, and greater transparency and public participation in legislative and regulatory processes. The UAE has neither public elections nor political parties and does not recognize rights of association or authorize trade unions.

SISON